

**Members Present: Don Bedard (Vice Chair); Michele Gammal; Joan Falcao; Brooke Scott.**

**Member Absent: David Roy (Chair)**

Others Present: Martha Taylor-Varney, ZA

6:01 PM – **D. Bedard** called the meeting to order.

**Changes to the Agenda**

Change 3A (Discussion with Nate Hayward on acquisition of Lavin property and associated septic) to a discussion on regulating Short-Term Rentals in South Hero. Discussion only; no decisions.

**Public Comment**

There was none.

**Old Business**

- A. Referring to a discussion at the December 4 meeting, **M. Gammal** asked the Board if there could be any legal action against the Town if short-term rentals (STRs) were regulated. M. Taylor-Varney said that her interest is only related to septic capacity and protecting the lake from failed systems because of short-term rentals exceeding the capacity of existing septic systems. Her office has received several calls from concerned neighbors to STRs that are being occupied by more people than the systems are designed to accommodate, and she has found ads for some rentals that state occupancy numbers exceeding the systems' designs or allowed use. Septic issues are under the State's jurisdiction. **M. Gammal** asked if it was the Town's responsibility to report these violations to the State, and whether it is instead residents'. Is a registry necessary? Suggestions included educating owners of STRs and the public first, through a Town webpage or mailings. **J. Falcao** suggested that a notice could be posted on each STR with the number of people allowed to occupy the dwelling. Could the grand list include the number of bedrooms and whether the property is seasonal or year-round? This would give residents a resource to look up the occupancy limit of any given property. This discussion will continue under Old Business on the next agenda.
- B. Continue Discussion on Multi-Modal Path – The Commission noted that the Town's acquisition of the Lavin property could open more options for a path from the school to the library. Could this eliminate a section of the multi-modal path along South St.? There has already been a temporary path brush-hogged through the property that is fairly level. During DRB review, should easements for a path be included on the site plan? This discussion will continue. **M. Gammal** also asked who would be able to re-paint the crosswalk on South St. by the school.
- C. Hazard Mitigation Committee – **D. Roy** will represent the Planning Commission on the committee. There are also 2 representatives from the Selectboard, and Town Office employees. The committee will meet with Shaun Coleman of Northwest Regional Planning Commission on January 9, 2025 at the Town Office at 11AM.

**Approve Minutes of December 4, 2024**

The Board agreed to postpone this to the January 15 meeting.

**Administrator’s Report**

1. There will be no meeting on January 1<sup>st</sup>. The next meeting will be January 15, 2025.
2. The ZA received an email from the Regional Flood Plain Manager notifying Towns that, beginning January 1, 2025, new homes in the Special Flood Hazard Areas must be at least two feet above the Base Flood Level to qualify for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Mortgage Insurance. The base flood level in South Hero is 102 feet. The median lake level is 95.5 feet. Substantial renovations in the flood hazard area of existing structures require Conditional Use review per Sec. 905.A.3 of the South Hero Development Regulations. However, the Regulations do not permit any new residential structures in the Special Flood Hazard Area (Sec. 904.D.1(a)).

**Announcements**

- a. Meeting House Update – The ZA received an email from Sandy Gregg announcing that the South Hero Foundation has secured an anonymous grant of \$100,000 that starts in 2025. It will come to the Foundation in \$25,000 annual increments. The \$100,000 grant is intended to be a “match” incentive.
- b. Town Office Committee – The Selectboard will draft an article for the voters at Town Meeting to approve a bond for \$2.9 million for the proposed new Town Office.

**Next Meeting**

January 15, 2025 at the Town Office at 6PM.

**Adjournment**

6:59PM – **B. Scott** moved to adjourn; **J. Falcao** second. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,  
Martha Taylor-Varney

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For the Planning Commission

*These minutes are unofficial until approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting. All motions were unanimous unless otherwise indicated.*